

Application No. 10/810,263
Amendment "B" dated March 31, 2006

REMARKS

These remarks are responsive to the Office Action dated February 1, 2006 (hereinafter, "the Office Action"), having a shortened statutory period that expires April 3, 2006.

As a preliminary matter and in response to Section 2 of the Office Action, the undersigned notes that the English counterparts of the foreign language references cited in the specification have already been cited in prior Information Disclosure Statements in this case. Specifically, Japanese Patent Application Laid-open No. 9-508773 (1997) referred to in paragraph 0005 of the specification corresponds to International Publication No. WO95/32594, which was already submitted in the Information Disclosure Statement (IDS) of March 26, 2004. Furthermore, Japanese Patent Application No. 8-348900 (1996) corresponds to International Publications Nos. WO98/29970 and WO98/30052 and European Patent Applications (published) Nos. EP 0896442 A1 and EP 0902594 A1, which were already submitted in the Information Disclosure Statement of March 26, 2004.

Section 4 of the Office Action allowed Claims 1-5. However, the Applicants submitted a preliminary amendment on December 29, 2005 cancelling Claims 1-5 and adding new Claims 6-24. Accordingly, the allowance of Claims 1-5 and any objection to those claims are moot. By pointing this out, the undersigned respectfully submits that these remarks are fully responsive to the Office Action dated February 1, 2006. It appears that the preliminary amendment may still have been en route to the Examiner at the time Claims 1-5 were examined and the Office Action was mailed. The undersigned regrets any inconvenience this may have caused the Examiner.

In the event that the Examiner finds remaining impediment to a prompt allowance of this application that may be clarified through a telephone interview, the Examiner is requested to contact the undersigned attorney.

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Dated this 31st day of March, 2006.

Respectfully submitted,



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